



## **Big Lake General Store Ribbon-Cutting**

Remarks by Gov. Jan Brewer

Wednesday, August 24, 2011

Thank you, and good morning, everyone!

I'm absolutely DELIGHTED to be here in the White Mountains -- with gorgeous Big Lake behind me -- and surrounded by natural beauty all around.

In the aftermath of the Wallow Fire, I've come to tell you that you have not been forgotten.

I've come to say that we've been with you at the start, during, and after the fire.

We are with you today -- and, we will be with you tomorrow, and all the days following.

I've come here today so we can celebrate together the re-opening of this landmark on Big Lake.

I'm proud to be a part of a ceremony that speaks to the state and the entire country and says the Big Lake Area is open for business.

The Big Lake General Store is testimony to the spirit of the people here:

Strong, never breaking, never surrendering -- even to the most vicious hand that Mother Nature can dish out.

I want to thank Rick and Clotilda Law for hosting this event -- the third generation owning and operating the General Store.

We can see from here that the beauty surrounding this pristine area has not been diminished -- and I know Big Lake is providing excellent summer angling opportunities for some VERY FAT TROUT.

With 530 surface acres, this deep mountain lake is Arizona's largest and most productive trout fishery.

And, Big Lake is just one of only THREE high mountain lakes in Arizona – Woods Canyon and Luna Lake are the others -- where you can rent a boat and catch a stringer full of fish.

The days are getting shorter, the nights are getting longer and the lakes are cooling down. So, superb late summer fishing is just getting underway in the mountain lakes.

Both Show Low Lake and Fool Hollow Lake in the White Mountains are now full of trout – these two lakes received many of the trout that couldn't be stocked in places such as the Greer Lakes.

Game and Fish is now stocking native Apache trout in the Little Colorado River in Greer, and at Sheep's Crossing.

And, Silver Creek near Show Low is also heavily stocked with catchable Apache trout right now – it received all the native trout that Game and Fish wasn't able to stock in the streams impacted by the Wallow Fire.

I've also come here today to tell anyone who will listen that not only is the Big Lake Area open for business – but so is ...

- Alpine ...
- Nutrioso ...
- Greer ...
- Sprucedale ...
- Hannagan Meadow ...
- Springerville/Eager ... and South Fork.

The beauty of these areas has been preserved – and businesses saved – because of the heroic efforts of firefighters and emergency personnel, as well as Arizona residents who obeyed evacuation orders.

More than 40,000 firefighters banded together to battle fires across Arizona this spring and summer.

I'd like to extend special thanks to Joe Reinarz of the Type One Incident Command Team for stepping up, listening, and doing a great job running fire protection in this area.

Let me also mention that the response by state agencies and local authorities was no less significant.

The Arizona Department of Transportation supported evacuation efforts and managed more than 200 miles of closed state highways.

The Department of Agriculture deployed staff to perform welfare checks on livestock; and the Department of Environmental Quality placed air-quality monitors to measure smoke levels and warn area residents of conditions hazardous to their health.

Thankfully, federal funding will pay for MOST of the costs associated with fighting the Wallow, Horseshoe Two and Monument fires.

Additionally, I issued Emergency Declarations to make available state funding for Apache, Greenlee and Cochise counties.

And, the federal government has approved low-interest loans and other aid for qualifying homeowners and businesses.

Just last week, I announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has granted my request for a disaster designation for Arizona farmers and ranchers impacted by damaging drought, wildfires and winds this year.

This follows a disaster designation granted last month for the San Carlos Apache Reservation and contiguous counties in northeastern Arizona and extends this federal aid to qualifying farmers and ranchers in Cochise, Santa Cruz and Pima counties.

I know that for many high country residents, the biggest threat now is from flooding and erosion on steep hillsides that have been scorched and stripped of vegetation.

So, impressive steps are being taken.

Large-scale seeding and mulching has helped stabilize mountain soil. More than 620,000 sandbags and four miles of concrete barrier are in place to steer runoff away from homes.

A widespread effort to seed, drop straw and take other steps to mitigate flood damage is already well underway at the Wallow, Horseshoe Two and Monument burn sites.

The State of Arizona also is working with the National Weather Service and county officials to place precipitation gauges in these areas, giving emergency officials and residents downstream advance notice when floodwaters are likely.

The state is closely monitoring water quality in fire-affected watersheds, and has prepared reservoirs in areas that might be required to receive high levels of monsoon runoff.

Recovery of Arizona's forests will take time.

Too many years of hands-off forest management has left our public lands overgrown and vulnerable to the kinds of massive blazes we've seen this year.

We need a return to responsible thinning and active management of federal lands.

Fortunately, Arizona is leading the way with its 4 Forest Restoration Initiative.

The plan is to restore natural, healthy forest conditions across 2.4 million acres in northern Arizona over the next two decades. With this effort and others like it we can minimize the fires of the future.

I know the physical, emotional and financial toll that the fires have taken.

But, I also know that where there HAS been damage -- homes and businesses will be rebuilt, and our forests will return.

So, here, next to Big Lake, we celebrate the preservation of its beauty -- recognizing the firefighters and volunteers from across Arizona and around the country who came to save its splendid features.

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this celebration.

Thank you for allowing me to cut the ribbon and proclaim that the White Mountain area is open for business -- come one -- come all -- and see for yourself.